

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 116704
ORIGIN EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PA-02 /015 R

DRAFTED BY EA/P:JCANNON:EB

APPROVED BY EA/P:JCANNON

-----044506 081914Z /75

O 081902Z MAY 78

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 116704

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, US, VN (PRESS COVERAGE OF HUMPHREY-TROUNG TRIAL)

SUBJECT: MARY MCGRORY, WSTAR, 5/8/78 - WHEN THE STATE DEPT.
TEAM PLAYER' OVERPLAYED HIS HAND

QUOTE: KENNETH QUINN SEEMED ON THE WITNESS STAND THE
ULTIMATE STATE DEPARTMENT FLUNKY - A SMUG, ARROGANT,
'LET-EM-EAT-CAKE" ELITIST.

DEMOCRACY IN FOREIGN POLICY? DON'T BE FUNNY.
THE PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO KNOW? BEGONE
WHAT'S SECRET? EVERYTHING. CLASSIFY YESTERDAY'S WEATHER
REPORT.

QUINN, A SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO RTCHARD HOLBROOKE, ASSISTANT
SECRETARY FOR FAR EASTERN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS, WAS A
PROSECUTION WITNESS IN U.S. DISTRICT COURT IN ALEXANDRIA
IN ATTORNEY GENERAL GRIFFIN BELL'S SHOWCASE TRIAL OF A
HAPLESS PAIR OF PAPER-PASSERS, AND HE SEEMED DETERMINED
TO PROVE THAT HE WAS EVERYTHING THAT GEORGE WALLACE EVER
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SAID ABOUT "POINTY-HEADED BUREAUCRATS."

HE WAS DEFENDING THE "CLASSIFIED" LABEL THAT WAS ALLEGEDLY
CLIPPED OFF DOCUMENTS WHICH DAVID TRUONG, A YOUNG
VIETNAMESE EXPATRIATE DOVE, AND RONALD HUMPHREY, A MIDDLE-
AGED, LOVESICK USIA OFFICIAL, TURNED OVER, VIA A CIA-FBI

DOUBLE AGENT, TO THE VIETNAMESE IN PARIS IN 1975.

BY THE STANDARDS QUINN LAID DOWN, THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WOULD HARDLY HAVE KNOWN THE VIETNAM WAR WAS BEING FOUGHT, MUCH LESS THAT IT WAS OVER. ALMOST ALL INFORMATION MUST BE "PROTECTED" FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER.

THE FACT THAT SOME OF THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THE CABLES HAD BEEN PUBLISHED IN VARIOUS JOURNALS OF REPUTE CHANGED NOTHING.

IN HIS PEAK MOMENT, QUINN DECLARED THAT INFORMATION PUBLISHED IN NEWSPAPERS CAN NEVER BE ACCOUNTED "ABSOLUTELY TRUE." ONLY WHEN IT APPEARS IN A GOVERNMENT DOCUMENT DOES IT ACQUIRE A GOSPEL CHARACTER.

HOUR AFTER HOUR, UNDER THE POUNDING OF TRUONG'S WELL-NAMED DEFENSE COUNSEL, MICHAEL TIGAR, QUINN INSISTED THAT NUMEROUS WELL-KNOWN FACTS NONETHELESS MADE THE CABLES "SENSITIVE" AND THAT SOURCES, EVEN THOSE UNNAMED, HAD TO BE "PROTECTED."

BUT HE OVERPLAYED HIS HAND. SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE IT BECAME APPARENT THAT HE WAS NOT THE BLINKERED BLOCKHEAD HE WISHED TO BE TAKEN FOR.

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HE WAS, RATHER, THAT MOST VALUED OF GOVERNMENT SERVANTS, A TEAM PLAYER. HE WAS ALSO FIGHTING DOWN HIS OWN PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT OF THE DAMAGE WROUGHT BY TRUONG AND HUMPHREY IN THEIR FEVERED, FURTIVE EFFORTS TO MAKE PEACE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE VICTORS OF VIETNAM.

A SECRET CIA DOCUMENT, RELEASED BELATEDLY TO THE DEFENSE, EXPLAINED WHY QUINN CHOSE TO APPEAR AS A SECURITY FREAK, SEEING DANGER TO THE NATIONAL DEFENSE IN A LINE OF DIPLOMATIC CHITCHAT.

THE CIA MEMO, DATED MARCH 13, AND SIGNED BY RICHARD LEHMAN, SURFACES THE RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE CASE THAT ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL BRUSHED ASIDE IN HIS HEADLONG RUSH FOR GLORY.

HERE IS THE KEY LINE:

"A NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL CABLES COULD BE SAID AT LEAST TANGENTIALLY TO RELATE TO THE NATION'S DEFENSE BY A JESUIT."

QUINN WAS, IT SEEMS, THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S "JESUIT, -

WHETHER VOLUNTEER OR VICTIM OF PRESSURE FROM HIS EMBARRASSED SUPERIORS, NOT YET REVEALED. HE DENIED THAT ANYONE EVER ASKED HIM "TO BEEF UP" OR CHANGE HIS DAMAGE ASSESSMENT.

QUINN'S ORIGINAL VIEW OF HOW OUR DEFENSES HAD BEEN WEAKENED BY THE UNAUTHORIZED CABLE TRAFFIC - WHICH THE FBI AND THE CIA HAD INTERCEPTED AND PASSED ON INTACT - WAS CONTAINED IN ANOTHER SECRET GOVERNMENT DOCUMENT.

A REPORT BY STATE DEPARTMENT SECURITY OFFICER DONALD D. ARABIAN HAS HIM SAYING THAT "THE OVERALL DAMAGE CAUSED BY THE DISCLOSURE WAS MINOR. . . (AND) WOULD HAVE NO UNCLASSIFIED

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IMPACT ON OUR CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS (IN PARIS)."

WHEN MARK FOSTER, AN ATTORNEY FOR HUMPHREY, ASKED HIM ABOUT HIS FIRST ASSESSMENT, QUINN SAID HE COULDN'T RECALL IT.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT NEEDS A "JESUIT" BADLY RIGHT NOW BECAUSE ONE REPUTATION THAT MAY BE DAMAGED, NO MATTER WHICH WAY THE VERDICT GOES, IS THAT OF DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE WARREN CHRISTOPHER.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, WHO IS PERSONALLY MASTERMINDING THE CASE, LEANED HEAVILY ON A CHRISTOPHER LETTER TO DEFEND THE WARRANTLESS BUGGING, TAPPING AND SURVEILLANCE WHICH HE AND PRESIDENT CARTER AUTHORIZED TO CRACK THE HUMPHREY-TRUONG "CONSPIRACY."

CHRISTOPHER, WHO APPARENTLY CAN ALSO BE A "JESUIT", CALLED IT "GRAVE," AND EVIDENCE THAT "THE SECURITY OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN COMPROMISED AND PENETRATED."

IT'S A CLOSE CALL WHICH OF THE TWO BIG VIETNAM POLITICAL TRIALS OF THE NIXON DAYS THE HUMPHREY-TRUONG PAGEANT MORE RESEMBLES, THE PENTAGON PAPERS CASE OR THE BERRIGAN AFFAIR, BOTH OF WHICH SPRANG FROM GOVERNMENT'S MIGHTY IRRITATION WITH PEOPLE WHO TOOK MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS. IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, IT SOLEMNLY ARGUED THAT PUBLIC INFORMATION CONSTITUTES "NATIONAL DEFENSE" SECRETS, AND IN THE SECOND, THAT AFTER-DINNER FANTASIZING ABOUT KIDNAPPING HENRY KISSINGER BY FIVE OVERWROUGHT CLERICS IS A CRIME.

THE POINT ABOUT CARTER'S FIRST BIG POLITICAL TRIAL IS THAT AT MIDPOINT, THE BURDEN IS ON THE GOVERNMENT TO PROVE THAT UNCLASSIFIED

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THERE WAS NO CONSPIRACY ON THE PART OF STATE, THE CIA, THE
FBI AND THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT. THE EVIDENCE, AS THE
PROSECUTION PREPARES TO REST, SUGGESTS THAT THE AGENCIES

WERE "BREATHING TOGETHER" IN THEIR EFFORTS TO MAKE
HUMPHREY AND TRUONG LOOK LIKE BIG GAME - BREATHING SO
HARD, IN FACT, THEY COULD END UP WITH RED FACES. ENDQUOTE
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ESPIONAGE, PRESS RELEASES, TRIALS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE116704
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: JCANNON:EB
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780195-0132
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780582/aaaacryu.tel
Line Count: 183
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 0bd6b4a2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN EA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2760292
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MARY MCGRORY, WSTAR, 5/8/78 - WHEN THE STATE DEPT. TEAM PLAYER!' OVERPLAYED HIS HAND QUOTE: KENNETH QUINN SEEMED ON THE WITNESS STAND
TAGS: SOPN, PINT, PINS, US, VN, VM
To: CANBERRA
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/0bd6b4a2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014